

Cosmic Consciousness

By Cecil A. Poole, F. R. C.



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By CECIL A. POOLE, F. R. C.



In considering Cosmic Consciousness, I am not going to attempt to cover the subject completely, but rather to convey the impression of the tremendous scope of this subject and to point out considerations that may stimulate your thinking. The subject is too great for the consideration of any one intellect; it cannot be confined to the interpretation of one individual or group of individuals; it cannot even be confined to expression in words. Nevertheless, it is a subject which we must consider, and, in the light of our understanding of this subject, we are better able to prepare the path which will constitute the way toward the ultimate aims of our existence.

It is important that we consider Cosmic Consciousness from the standpoint of definition, not because it can be limited to definition, but because it gives us a working point upon which to establish our considerations. Probably that which most nearly approaches a formal definition of the subject is that given by Bucke in his book entitled *Cosmic Consciousness*. Among his writings the following is significant: "*The prime characteristic of Cosmic*

Consciousness is, as its name implies, *a consciousness of the cosmos, that is, of the life and order of the universe.* Along with the consciousness of the cosmos there occurs an intellectual enlightenment or illumination which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence—would make him almost a member of a new species. To this is added a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elevation, elation, and joyousness, and a quickening of the moral sense, which is fully as striking and *more important both to the individual and to the race than is the enhanced intellectual power.* With these come what may be called a sense of immortality, a consciousness of eternal life, *not a conviction that he shall have this, but the consciousness that he has it already."* Carefully consider these comments.

We see that Cosmic Consciousness is a power that transforms the individual. Bucke compares Cosmic Consciousness to lower forms of consciousness which he terms, first, that of simple consciousness possessed by any living creature; second, self-consciousness which is possessed by the human being to distinguish it from that possessed by other animals. Cosmic Consciousness is something in advance of either of these states of consciousness, as stated in the definition; it is an added state, a condition which goes beyond that which we can consider in the sense of our objective realization. We might say that consciousness itself is a composite of what we perceive through our

senses and what we know from our intuitive faculties; the latter includes what may be known to us from the previous experiences of the soul. Added to this, our consciousness includes awareness of self; the ability to realize that "I am" is made possible by consciousness. Without this intuition, without this state of being, we would merely be mechanisms which function because of reflex action and which have that type of consciousness which Bucke refers to as simple consciousness. Consciousness, as including the perception of the objective senses together with the intuitive abilities of the awareness of self, we might state, is a distinct possession of the human being. It sets him aside from other living things because the type of consciousness enjoyed by him makes possible not only objective reason but also the possibility of mentally utilizing both physical and psychic phenomena, which he perceives through his senses and the extra-sensory perception of his subjective mind.

To consider Cosmic Consciousness, then, we must consider first of all the limitations of our objective consciousness and the ordinary conception of our awareness of self. This state of consciousness functions primarily in reference to the physical world. It functions and gives us consciousness. Imagine, if you will, your consciousness being aware not only of that which you perceive in this room, but imagine your consciousness reaching out beyond this room and its physical limitations. Imagine it being a part of the

Cosmic itself and thereby being all inclusive instead of definitely limited. This thought impresses itself upon us, indicating that Cosmic Consciousness is, first of all, something that exists beyond the limits of what we ordinarily perceive; in other words, it is the expanding of an ability to perceive not by the usual accepted way, but by co-operation with a greater force. We expand our ability to see a minute object with a microscope; we expand our ability to hear a sound at a distance by means of the telephone or radio, but no *material* aid will expand the range of our senses to the point where we can conceive of the Cosmic scheme of things, or cause us to know the underlying laws operating in all things, nor can physical instruments bring to our perception a thing of a non-physical nature. Just as in order to explore the heavens a particular material arrangement which we call a telescope is necessary, so it is that if we are going to explore the nature of things which is not physical, a certain mental or psychic arrangement is necessary. Cosmic Consciousness is that arrangement.

Cosmic Consciousness, according to this comparison, is to the perception of the soul what a telescope is to the eye. The eye can see without the telescope, consciousness can be an attribute of the soul without Cosmic Consciousness, but just as the telescope extends or expands the field of vision, so the realization of the power that lies outside of our objective realization by means of Cosmic Conscious-

ness extends our ability to perceive far beyond the limitations of what we usually consider the range of our conscious perception. Let us not misunderstand the expansion of this state to the point where we would, to use the common expression, live in the clouds. Let us realize that those who have attained Cosmic Consciousness have also been human beings.

May we never forget that the understanding of life is not intended at any time to so lower the estimate of the purpose of the physical body as to believe that it should be given no consideration. The fact that we *are* here in a physical body is evidence of the fact that it is necessary for our present development; therefore, the first step toward the attainment of Cosmic Consciousness must be made in this physical body, and the school of thought which would have us believe that the consideration of the body should be eliminated is not hastening the development of the state of Cosmic Consciousness, but rather is postponing it.

It is difficult for some people to be able to make use of a small amount of psychic development. They believe that they then have the right to live in the clouds, they forget that the requirements of daily life go on whether we are masters or whether we are uninitiated students. He who fails to appreciate the necessity of daily living is doing the very opposite of that which he believes he is accomplishing. It is very true that the physical should not

have *first* consideration, but it is also very true that the physical should have *very important* and *careful* consideration. What is demanded of the occultist is not that we eliminate consideration of the body, but that we learn to make the body intelligently serve the purpose of suitably housing the soul. The soul-personality must progress in the environment in which it is placed. The placing was not made casually or without purpose, but was definitely made to add to its experience and contribute to its growth by gaining knowledge in that state of existence.

One of the first manifestations of Cosmic Consciousness in the human being is the quickening of his intuitive ability. The first spark of Cosmic Consciousness brings to the human the realization of the tremendous force which exists in the universe, and of it his soul is a part. This manifestation of intuition is one of the first faculties that the student of the occult must attempt to develop, which is why, in the Rosicrucian course of study, the first experiments center around this particular faculty. Intuition is the voice of the Cosmic within ourselves. The development of this faculty must be left to the individual, but it is not my purpose here to attempt to suggest methods or procedures, other than that which is already known to you through your studies, for the development of this faculty. It is important that I stress the fact that until you have conscientiously attempted to develop this faculty,

to perform the exercises which are for the purpose of assisting its growth, you have not begun the proper steps which will lead to the ultimate comprehension and attainment of Cosmic Consciousness. Intuition, the voice of conscience, the hunch, or whatever we wish to call it, is what may be technically termed as pertaining to the field of extra-sensory perception; that is, the ability to perceive beyond the range of the physical senses. If man were given only the ability of physical sense perception, then ultimate knowledge could easily be attained because all that man would need to know is what he actually physically perceives. The why and purpose of things would be of no value or particular interest to him. However, as we exist to gain an understanding not only of what is about us, but what constitutes the principles and forces that have brought these things into existence, we must also have psychic perception.

The same thing that created all with which we must deal in the physical world also created us. Therefore, the common unit between us and all other things of a physical nature cannot be conceived in us alone or in the things which we perceive; neither can the common unit that exists between us as individual living entities of the Creator Himself or the Cosmic be compared with the perception of that which exists in common between these two phases. In addition, besides considering these two planes,

physical and immaterial, we find that such a division is entirely imaginary, that there is no point where physical manifestation ceases and nonmaterial manifestation begins except in our own minds. Neither in the limitations of our mind nor in the physical world is there a defined boundary between physical and psychic vibrations underlying the manifestations of all things, and we cannot say at which certain vibratory rate a manifestation transforms itself from the physical to the psychic. There exists a projection or rather a continuation of manifestation. There is no more difference between the vibration which produces what we refer to as physical, and that which produces psychic manifestations, than there is between vibrations which, when reproduced on a very low note of an organ, produce vibrations which we do not know whether we perceive by hearing or feeling. In other words, there is no one point which can be defined clearly as the limit of the field of manifestation of one rate of vibration as distinguished from another. Opinions have brought about limitations of interpretations and have led us to define in our own minds that which we consider to be physical and psychic, or ordinary and miraculous, and in reality there is no line that can be drawn between these conditions except as it exists in our own conception of them. We might even go on to say that there is no line that can definitely distinguish between consciousness and Cosmic Consciousness. The first manifestation of

Cosmic Consciousness is intuition, and is not a new thing in our being, but a realization of a factor already there. Just as adjustment takes place in the development of our physical bodies when, for example, in adolescence bodily changes also affect mental outlook, so it is that when through the proper development of our inner selves, changes take place in our conception of things, in our ability to perceive differently. It is merely a step forward in a perfectly natural state of things in the gaining of an added ability. In order to survive as a normal, sane individual and grow into a normal adult, the adolescent must be directed to adapt himself to the changing physical and mental conditions of the life which is before him. So must we, upon the attainment of a glimpse of a change within our psychic being, be directed to maintain our mental and physical equilibrium, and by availing ourselves of the added abilities also be able to adapt ourselves to the conditions which are apparently new, and at the same time maintain a normal, healthy existence.

Intuition serves its purpose in our daily life. It can be directed and guided into a potent force which will in turn direct us. It may be the key to those things which we otherwise could not know. Closely connected with intuition is meditation. Again, I am referring to proper methods of meditation made available in the instructions which you receive in your monographs. Let us consider meditation and intuition in our daily lives as a means or

a step toward development of Cosmic Consciousness. True meditation, or the contemplation of those things to which we would direct our consciousness, is frequently considered the only form of meditation. There is, however, a more active form of meditation which we can carry on practically all the time. I think possibly one of the outstanding proponents of this theory of meditation was Count Herman Keyserling, who stated: "For me, personally, meditation has acquired in the course of years a new meaning. Facing reality in a positive way, and without evading it, is for my active temperament a form of meditation. If I do not shrink from the difficulties of life, but contemplate them, then I consider I have done my kind of meditation. Learning through direct experience, through pain and suffering, what your innermost attitude is when facing reality, is the best form of spiritual exercise."

Here we see meditation as an active, positive force for the improvement of our daily living. Intuition when properly developed can be the key which will produce the *hunch*, or in other words, will be the point of departure for our acts, while the results of proper meditation upon this point will indicate a way to go and show us the path.

It is very important to stress that the full importance, the complete realization of the truth of these last few statements, is in itself an important step in the development of Cosmic Consciousness. The lack of complete

realization is frequently a thing that retards the ability to develop further, because until we can have a realization of what constitutes some of the fundamental steps of our progress, we are not in a position to advance any further. Therefore, I wish to emphasize that it is necessary for us to realize these few important adaptations, to grasp fully that only by the expanding of consciousness itself can Cosmic Consciousness be obtained, which in turn means that only by utilizing the factors which are now at our command, can we thus reach out and begin to utilize other factors which now lie outside the field of our existence. Proper consideration and use of meditation, the development of our intuitive abilities and faculties, will make it possible for us to meet the stress of everyday life.

I have stated quite definitely that Cosmic Consciousness, as compared with our usually accepted conception of consciousness, is not a great deal different except that it reaches to a higher or rather more expansive range. It has thereby been inferred that the change from one type of consciousness to another would not be a radical departure. This is true up to a certain point; and then, after certain powers have been accumulated, certain understanding has become established in our minds, there comes a time when pressure becomes so great that it is like the accumulation of water behind a dam, and the force builds itself up to a point where the influx of true

realization dawns upon us in a flash. Examples of this are not an uncommon experience in the life of any individual. Almost everyone has experienced the solving of a problem by having a solution come suddenly into his mind. This solution comes, it is true, as a result of intuition, but it comes more effectively when the intuition has been properly developed and the steps toward the solution of the problem have been properly directed through concentration and meditation. More outstanding illustrations are also available to show an awareness coming apparently as a sudden inspiration. It is important to remember that back of all this lies training and knowledge.

Many are the stories related to the actual influence of Cosmic Consciousness and its demands having changed the lives of those who have received it. Think of Paul of Tarsus, riding on an errand of persecution, and because of this sudden light which dawned in his mind, the actual attainment of Cosmic Consciousness, his whole world was changed. All those who have realized such an experience tell similar facts. Other illustrations include Mohammed, and Buddha, who left family and fortune; but of far more importance to us than these outstanding cases are the individuals who have not become recorded in history, yet who also have received that spark of illumination which made their own lives and the lives of those about them more effective.

We see, therefore, that the raising of our consciousness to a higher plane is not confining our individual existence to a particular attainment, but rather the complete change of our whole being; in other words, we must bear in mind that the ultimate attainment of Cosmic Consciousness does not isolate an individual, but rather expands his scope of existence, his field of perception and comprehension, and consequently places him in a new routine of daily living. *It is not a case of changing our environment* which would affect us from without, but of *changing ourselves* which will affect our environment from within.

As the result of the gaining of this state of consciousness by individuals, it is apparent that not only will the individual be affected, but as the human race advances in its evolutionary progress there will come a time when all mankind will attain this depth of understanding. Many of our accepted social standards or artificialities will change with the coming of this universal Cosmic Consciousness and it will revolutionize the human soul-personality individually and collectively.

The trials and tribulations of mankind are due mainly to the lack of cooperation upon the part of man in working with the forces which made him. We cannot continually fight against those forces which exist in and about us, and upon which the universe exists. Man cannot expect to control any Cosmic force or any *natural force* as he may call it, but man has been given the in-

telligence to harness forces and to use them. This is evident with many physical forces. The power in a waterfall is used for the providing of illumination and heat for the comfort of millions of people; likewise the power that exists in the Cosmic forces can be harnessed by the mental equipment of man and thus will make him aware of these forces which were created to work in unison with him and direct his development. The Cosmos is actually those laws which have been established by the Creator. These laws were established in order to complete and bring about the ultimate manifestation of the universe as conceived in the mind of the Creator; therefore, they are permanent, they are definite, they work toward a definite end. For them to change would be directly contrary to the justice of God. By supplication upon the part of man he cannot expect these laws to be set aside; but he can work with these laws, and due to the fact that they will not change, it is possible for man to learn to depend upon them and use them.

It will appear to many that my comments are for the purpose of stating that the gaining of Cosmic Consciousness is the ultimate achievement of the individual, and for humanity a panacea by which all the ills of the world may be solved. However, this is not to deny the asking of the question, "Why try to achieve Cosmic Consciousness?"

Many individuals have said that the process of psychic development, or the achievement of this state of consciousness, is of value only for mental recreation and satisfaction, or they might have referred to it as a psychological plaything. It is regrettable that many people have this attitude toward any profound philosophy, and even those who claim to be more or less sincere. It is found frequently by them that the study of the occult and of practical psychology is an interesting pastime when everything in life is running quite smoothly. These very individuals, however, who appear to study in this field of thought, would abandon such study if it were a matter of actually using and applying the principles for the betterment of themselves and those about them. In other words, these individuals argue that mysticism is not practical, that it is something to do merely for entertainment and to occupy leisure time.

As Rosicrucians, we have only one answer: A mysticism which is not practical is *not* mysticism. It is simply the useless and impractical opinions of an individual, or a group of individuals. It is not worthy of being called a philosophy, or even a system of thought.

The attainment of Cosmic Consciousness by the human race, individually and collectively, is a part of the great evolutionary process outlined and established by our Maker. It is not something which we can choose whether we wish to do, or not. It is something that *we must*

eventually do, and our continued lives will offer, one after the other, the opportunity of taking the initial step; and after the initial step is taken it will offer us those opportunities, together with those temptations, which are closely linked with the attainment of anything of practical value.

Cosmic Consciousness, then, is something to which we can all aspire. To consider our definition again, we realize that it is a consciousness of the Cosmic forces and knowledge that is beyond the range of our ordinary comprehension. It is a consciousness that extends into eternal life in contradistinction to that consciousness which merely brings us awareness of the present physical existence. Through it we gain an actual, living conception of the fact that *our existence is a part of all that is*; also, that *all that is, is a part of us*.



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